

DPH Finalizes Recommendations For Next Groups Eligible For COVID-19 Vaccine

DOVER (Dec. 29, 2020) – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) has finalized its recommendations for Phase 1b, the next groups who will be considered eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. These groups include frontline essential workers and persons 65 and older. Currently, the state is in Phase 1a of vaccine rollout which includes vaccinations for health care personnel with direct contact with ill patients or infectious material, emergency medical services agencies, and long-term care staff and residents. Vaccination for Phase 1b groups is expected to begin by the end of January. In early December, DPH announced it would make the vaccine available in several phases. Important determining factors for each phase would include determining who is at greatest risk for death and illness from the virus, ensuring equitable distribution of the vaccine, and maintaining the functioning of critical health care systems. How many doses of the vaccine each group would be able to get is dependent upon vaccine supply.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) voted on Dec. 20, 2020, that Phase 1b should include frontline essential workers and persons 75 years and older. ACIP defines frontline essential workers as: First Responders (Firefighters, Police), Education (teachers, support staff, child care staff), Food and Agriculture, Manufacturing, Corrections workers, U.S. Postal Service workers, public transit workers, and grocery store workers. As is currently the case with health care workers to whom the vaccine has been distributed, leaders in these industries will be asked to identify which of their staff should receive the vaccine before others based on factors such as frequent close contact

with the public, and inability to social distance consistently at work. DPH is already working with several of these groups to assist them in their planning to secure vaccination partners. Frontline essential workforce leaders in these categories who have not heard from DPH are encouraged to visit the Agencies, Organizations, and Businesses section of de.gov/covidvaccine and complete the Planning Survey for Organizations with Essential Workforces.

On Dec. 22, the State Ethics Advisory Group voted to recommend adopting the ACIP Phase 1b approach. However, DPH decided to lower the age the state would consider eligible in Phase 1b from 75 to 65 based on statewide COVID-related deaths. While the median age for deaths among White and Asian persons is 82 and 83 respectively, the median age for deaths among Blacks is 74 and it is 66 for Hispanic individuals.

“Making this small change from the ACIP recommendations is the right thing to do for all people in our state,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “Doing so provides us the opportunity to vaccinate and protect many more Delawareans, especially those who are already disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to begin with due to a variety of factors.”

The State Ethics Advisory Group did not address any other groups, but it is expected to vote on a Phase 1c group soon. Vaccine is estimated to begin to be available for some individuals in Phase 1b groups in mid- to late January; DPH will provide updates on timing as they become available. Due to limited supplies of the vaccines, they may not be available to everyone in Phase 1b initially. Individuals 65+ will be asked to contact their health care provider directly near the end of January to discuss their options for receiving the vaccine. The next phases after 1b could see vaccine availability in mid- to late February, and it likely will be April before there is more widespread availability based on current supply. However, timelines are flexible as more supply could be available if additional vaccines are approved

for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Since Dec. 15, 8,422 vaccine doses have been administered in Delaware, and a total of 28,400 combined doses of the Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech vaccines have been received. All of the state's hospital systems have received vaccine for staff, as have the Federally Qualified Health Centers. Some long-term care facilities began vaccinating in the last two weeks, while waiting for the federal pharmacy partnership program in Delaware to kick off this week. Last week, Kent County EMS vaccinated some of its staff, while more will be vaccinated this week. Both New Castle County and Sussex County EMS have plans to vaccinate staff this week as well.

DPH has set up a Vaccine Call Center at 1-833-643-1715. Those who are deaf or hard of hearing should call 2-1-1 or text their ZIP code to 898-211. **DPH's Vaccine Call Center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday.** Individuals can email their questions concerning the vaccine to Vaccine@Delaware.gov. Individuals can also visit de.gov/covidvaccine for up-to-date information.